

## The "Butterfly" alphabet - possible sources

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I was most interested to see Roy Gault's update article on the "Butterfly" alphabet in the April issue (Bulletin 329, page 21) as these patterns bear the same characteristics as the majority of Australian patterns. In Roy's updated list I note that they all seemed to have been done in the same short period of time (late 1890s) and nearly all in London. I have had an opportunity to search through London Directories around that period to see if there was a "concentrated" location in London where candidate firms were situated.

Unfortunately, for most of the letter combinations there were several possible firms with the same matching initials. However, there were two with a "lone candidate" which might provide a clue to the common provider of this style of pattern.

DLN&S D.L. Nisbet & Son, mantle manufacturers,  
126 & 127 Wood Street EC.

VS&CO      Vyse, Sons, & Co, wholesale manufacturers of  
hats (of various kinds), etc,  
76 Wood Street EC

Then it struck me that I had seen a reference to a Wood Street Post Office with regard to provision of perforated stamps and checking back found that F. A. Hancock of the Wood Street Post Office had advertised in Directories of the late 1870s that he perforated stamps. The Wood Street Post Office at that time was at 37 & 38 Wood Street, EC (see Bulletin 319, Aug 2002, page 13; Bulletin 304, Feb. 2000, page 15; and Bulletin 270, June 1994, page 22). In Bulletin 285, (Dec 1996, page 13) Maurice Harp reported that Hancock had set up his business in 1873.

The Wood Street Post Office was not shown at 37 & 38 Wood Street from the 1887 Directory onwards, the site being tenanted by Francis Albert Hancock, bill and postage stamp dealer (1887 only),

and by Hancock Bros (Francis and his brother John), printers and stationers, engravers and lithographers, etc. Hancock Bros. also gave as an additional address for their business, 5 Little Love Lane - Little Love Lane ran beside 37 Wood Street. The Street Directory listing in the late 1880s show the tenant at 5 Little Love Lane being "The Initial Perforator Company". In 1892, The Initial Perforator Company had moved into 37 Wood Street with Hancock Bros., although Hancock Bros. were still shown at 5 Little Love Lane the following year.

Could this point to the source of this alphabet? With this possible Wood Street link, albeit tenuous, I went back to the Directories to see if there were candidate firms for the other initial combinations who were near Wood Street. There seemed to be no shortage of firms with those combinations of initials, so it did not lead to any probable user identities.

Some examples of those near Wood Street are:

D&J	Davies & Jones, linen warehousemen, 9 & 10 Goldsmith St., EC
HK&CO	Henry Knight & Co, manufacturers, 3 Fell St., Wood St., EC
HM&CO	Henry Morris & Co, manufacturers' agents, 1a Wood St., EC
HW&CO	Henry White & Co, watchmakers, 63 Cheapside. EC
	Henry Williams & Co, wine & spirit merchants, 11 Queen Victoria St., EC
	Howard Wall & Co, 81 Wood St., EC
MW&CO	Maynard, Walker & Co, pig iron, 85 Gracechurch St., EC
NW&CO	Nelson, Walker & Co, glove agents, 39 Wood St., EC

The one known user of a perfin with this style of alphabet, Olney, Amsden & Sons Ltd. (1897-1898), were located at that time at 9-11

Falcon Street, Aldersgate Street, EC, only a short distance from Wood Street. In addition, the head office of Negretti & Zambias Ltd (? user of "N&Z" perfin) was at 38 Holborn Viaduct, EC, but they also had a branch at 45 Cornhill, EC, not far from Wood Street.

In the London Directories immediately prior to 1895, the tenants of 37 Wood Street were listed as Hancock Bros, printers, and The Initial Perforating Company. In "The Times" in mid- 1895, John and Francis Hancock, trading as Hancock Brothers of Wood Street, were in proceedings in the Bankruptcy Court, and their printing business was not listed in Directories after that time. Francis Albert Hancock was 66 years old in 1895, based on the 1871, 1881, 1891 and 1901 Census data.

In the 1896 Directory, The Initial Perforating Company was shown at 36 Basinghall Street, EC (on the opposite side of Guildhall to Wood Street) so Frank Hancock may have continued his stamp perforating business for a short time under this company name, perhaps using the system which produced the "Butterfly" alphabet. This could explain the period of usage of this alphabet.

Another possibility comes from the entry for Frank Braham of the Tabernacle Street Post Office in the Trades Directory section of the late 1890s. He advertised that he perforated postage stamps, and added "no die system". Could "no die system" indicate that customers did not have to purchase an expensive die, with the implication that Braham might have used a grid of holes in which to set up pin patterns? Braham advertised this system from about 1894 so this could also explain the period of usage of the "Butterfly" alphabet. Tabernacle Street, however, was over half a mile from Wood Street and the companies listed above.

Further date information, and confirmed user identities, for perfins of this alphabet will be needed before the provider of this style of pattern can be ascertained with more confidence.